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VDH 05-06

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH UPDATES FISH CONSUMPTION ADVISORIES

(RICHMOND, Va.)— The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) has issued a new fish consumption advisory and has modified several existing advisories for various waterways throughout the Commonwealth. The advisories are in response to recent tissue sample tests conducted by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).

Test results indicate that the levels of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and mercury exceed maximum levels allowed for bodies of water where fish are harvested for food.

“VDH issues these advisories to protect people from adverse health effects of PCBs and mercury and to help people enjoy eating fish in a safe and healthy manner,” said Khizar Wasti, Ph.D, director of the VDH division of health hazards control. “Long-term consumption of fish contaminated with high levels of PCBs may increase the risk of cancer. Prolonged consumption of fish contaminated with high levels of mercury can permanently damage the brain, kidney and developing fetus if consumed by a pregnant woman.”

Women who are pregnant or may become pregnant, nursing mothers and young children should not eat fish contaminated with PCBs or mercury from these advisory areas.

Because PCBs tend to concentrate in the fatty tissues of the fish, VDH recommends the following precautions to reduce any potential harmful effects from eating fish:

- Eat the smaller, younger fish (within the legal limits). Younger fish are less likely to contain harmful levels of contaminants than larger, older fish.
- Remove the skin, the fat from the belly and top, and internal organs before cooking the fish.
- Bake, broil or grill on an open rack to allow fats to drain away from the meat.
- Discard the fats that cook out of the fish.
- Avoid or reduce the amount of fish drippings or broth that is used to flavor the meal.
- Eat less deep-fried fish, since frying seals contaminants into the fatty tissue.

Mercury concentrates in the fish muscle and is not reduced by cleaning or cooking.

The following details one new fish consumption advisory, four modified advisories due to PCB contamination, and three modified advisories due to mercury contamination:

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New Advisory

- Fairfax County—Indian Run (entire Run) near Annandale downstream from State Route 236 approximately three miles to Back Lick Run. No more than two eight-ounce meals per month of creek chub should be consumed.

Modified Advisories

- Fairfax County, Manassas Park City and Prince William County—Bull Run near Manassas Park from the I-66 bridge downstream approximately 14 miles to the Route 612 (Yates Ford Road) bridge. The previous advisory recommended that no more than two eight-ounce meals per month of channel catfish should be consumed. The advisory has been updated to also recommend that no more than two eight-ounce meals per month of carp should be consumed.
- Roanoke County, Franklin County, Bedford County and Pittsylvania County—Roanoke River/Smith Mountain Lake from below the Niagara Dam downstream to Smith Mountain Dam, including the Blackwater River to the Route 122 Bridge. These river segments comprise approximately 13 miles. The previous advisory recommended that no more than two eight-ounce meals per month of flathead catfish (less than 32 inches in size), striped bass, gizzard shad, redhorse sucker, largemouth bass and carp should be consumed. Per the previous advisory, flathead catfish (greater than 32 inches in size) should not be eaten. The advisory has been updated to also recommend that no more than two eight-ounce meals per month of channel catfish should be consumed.
- Washington County and Bristol City—Beaver Creek from Beaver Creek Dam downstream approximately ten miles to the Virginia/Tennessee state line within the City of Bristol. In addition to these affected boundaries, the Little Creek Tributary has been added to the updated advisory. Per the previous advisory, carp and largemouth bass should not be eaten. The advisory has been updated to also recommend that smallmouth bass not be eaten, and no more than two eight-ounce meals per month of any other species should be consumed.
- Buchanan County—Knox Creek from the Virginia/Kentucky state line upstream to its headwaters near the Virginia/West Virginia state line including its tributaries. These river segments comprise approximately 89 miles. The previous advisory recommended that golden redhorse sucker, smallmouth bass, rock bass and northern hogsucker not be eaten, and no more than two eight-ounce meals per month of any other species should be consumed. The advisory has been updated to also recommend that channel catfish, redhorse sucker and creek chub not be consumed.

Modified Fish Advisories Due To Mercury Contamination

- Surry County, Southampton County, Isle of Wight County, Franklin City and Suffolk City—Blackwater River from State Route 31 near Dendron downstream approximately 66 miles to the Virginia/North Carolina state line. The 66-mile extension of the Blackwater River is an update to the previous advisory for this area. The previous

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advisory recommended that no more than two eight-ounce meals per month of largemouth bass and redear sunfish should be consumed. The advisory has been updated to also recommend that no more than two eight-ounce meals per month of bowfin, white catfish, redhorse sucker and longnose gar should be consumed.

- Chesapeake City and Suffolk City—Great Dismal Swamp Canal from the Deep Creek Locks south to the Virginia/North Carolina state line including Lake Drummond and Feeder Ditch. The inclusion of Lake Drummond is an update to the previous advisory for this area. These river segments comprise approximately 18 miles. No more than two eight-ounce meals per month of chain pickerel and bowfin should be consumed.
- Essex County, King and Queen County, Middlesex County and Gloucester County—Dragon Run Swamp (entire length)/Piankatank River near King and Queen County, Route 620 downstream approximately 46 miles to Deep Point Boat Landing (Route 606) on the Piankatank River across from Piankatank Shores. The 46-mile extension to Deep Point Boat Landing is an update to the previous advisory for this area. No more than two eight-ounce meals per month of largemouth bass should be consumed.

For more information on current fish consumption advisories in Virginia, visit <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/HHControl/fishingadvisories.asp>. A fact sheet with answers to frequently asked questions about fish consumption advisories is available at <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/hhcontrol/advisoriesq&a.pdf>.

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